



# NEWS RELEASE

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## CONNECTICUT NATIONAL GUARD TO FOCUS ON NEW RECRUITING PLAN

HARTFORD, Conn., - Maj. Gen. William A. Cugno, Adjutant General and Commander of the Connecticut National Guard, announces a bold, new recruiting plan to help boost its ranks.

The recruiting plan will include a cable television show and a magazine aimed at young people. Also, it plans to visit more high schools for recruitments and to contact more soldiers leaving active duty to entice them to remain.

Cugno said he will double the size of his 32-person recruiting force and set up three district offices for recruiting instead of running the entire operation out of headquarters in Hartford.

"I've got to get down to the community level," Cugno said. "I need to be in more schools for more time. There are 50,000 high-schoolers in Connecticut, and we need to make sure they know who we are."

The new plan calls for signing bonuses to people leaving active duty, including those who left as long ago as 20 years. While the military has age restrictions on first-time enlistments, Cugno said, he can take a former soldier who has at least five years'

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prior service as long as he or she is not older than 45 and push for better benefits to attract people.

To improve retention, Cugno is working on a system to get word out earlier to the units that will deploy and to give them information on where they will go and how long they will be gone. One of the most common complaints about the Guard has been that it gives incomplete, last-minute alerts to soldiers who will be sent to duty.

“Predictability is by far the most important component in retention,” Cugno said. “If you don't have predictability, it's not fair to the employers, it's not fair to the families, it's not fair to the individual. And I can't recruit in an environment like that.”

The Connecticut Guard is more than 1,000 soldiers short of its authorized strength of 4,200 for the Army and the Air National Guard, and there is the prospect for a more serious problem because, in recent months, it has fallen far short of recruiting goals.

The bulk of the Connecticut recruiting campaign will be aimed at students. In that strategy, a magazine will be distributed in high schools, and a cable access show will feature some of the training and missions of Guard units that young people might find exciting.

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Cugno says is prepared to promise fresh recruits that they won't be sent overseas for at least a year. That contingency, he said, should allay some fears, particularly among parents. "It takes a year just to get them through the training I need them to have," he said.

Another recruiting push will be aimed at prior service members, either just off active duty or out for longer.

In the past, Cugno said, about 50 percent of his recruits came from prior active duty, but now they are down to about 30 percent. Part of the problem, as he and many others see it, is that active duty soldiers have rotated through Iraq and Afghanistan on six-month tours and then have seen their Guard counterparts there for a year or more.

"You look at the Connecticut National Guard of 4,000 people, and 75 percent of them have a combat badge," Cugno said.

Since the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, 2,960 Connecticut Guard soldiers have fought in the war on terror, he said.

To attract former active duty service members just back from combat tours, Cugno will promise that they won't be sent overseas for at least two years.

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“It can be done by assigning them to units in Connecticut, such as the quick response force for the nuclear plants in Waterford or units dealing with civil disturbances and temporary security assignments. I've got other things for them to do, and they're all very important missions, so I have to communicate that to them,” Cugno said.

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